

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2206

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSUL CALI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 3105

USCINCSO FOR J-2

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CO

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN ROUNDUP AND EMBASSY PROJECTIONS

SUMMARY. THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OFFICIALLY CLOSED APRIL 14. LIBERALS ARE SUPREMELY CONFIDENT OF VICTORY. CONSERVATIVE DEPAIR WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY AN ATTACK ON PRESIDENT PASTRANA BY BERTHA DE OSPINA. CONGRESSIONAL LISTS HAVE PROLIFERATED AND THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE SENATE AND CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES. THE EMBASSY EXPECTS A LARGE VOTER TURNOUT ON APRIL 21 AND A WIDE MARGIN OF VICTORY FOR THE LIBERALS. END SUMMARY.

1. ALL PUBLIC CAMPAIGNING ENDED ON APRIL 14; CANDIDATES MAY STILL CAMPAIGN IN ENCLOSED AREAS, BUT THE ONLY PROPAGANDA PERMITTED IN THE MEDIA ARE ADS URGING THE PUBLIC TO VOTE. CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES REMAIN CONFIDENT THAT ELECTION DAY AND THE ENSUING PERIOD OF VOTE COUNTING WILL COME OFF PEACEFULLY.

3. LIBERAL CONFIDENCE IN A DECISIVE VICTORY HAS GROWN OVER THE MONTHS AND LIBERAL LEADERS NOW BELIEVE THAT AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY

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IS WITHIN REACH. LIBERAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ALFONSO LOPEZ

MICELSEN CLOSED HIS CAMPAIGN APRIL 14 WITH A SYMBOLIC RALLY IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CESAR, WHERE HE BEGAN HIS PUBLIC CAREER IN 1967 AS GOVERNOR. LIBERAL ENTHUSIASM IS HIGH AND ORGANIZATION APPEARS GOOD IN THE LARGE CITIES, WHERE THEY HOPE TO RUN UP AN OVERWHELMING LEAD.

2. CONSERVATIVES HAVE KNOWN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN THAT THEY FACED AN UPHILL FIGHT. THEIR CANDIDATE, ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO, HAS WAGED AN INTELLIGENT CAMPAIGN. HE HAS LARGELY AVOIDED DIRECT CONFRONTATIONS WITH LIBERALS IN ORDER NOT TO GOAD THEM INTO A MASSIVE TURNOUT ON ELECTION DAY. THE LIBERALS HAVE WON EVERY PARTISAN ELECTION THEY HAVE CONTESTED SINCE 1930 AND GOMEZ HAS BEEN COUNTING ON LIBERAL APATHY IN THEIR URBAN STRONGHOLDS WHILE CONSERVATIVES GET OUT THE VOTE IN THE RURAL AREAS. ANOTHER MAJOR ELEMENT OF GOMEZ' STRATEGY HAS BEEN TO WOO CONSERVATIVE ANAPISTAS. IN THIS HE HAS BEEN LARGELY SUCCESSFUL, DUE IN PART TO THE FACT THAT THE ANAPO CANDIDATE IS A WOMAN WHO HAS, MOREOVER, ALIENATED CONSERVATIVES BY HER USE OF LEFTIST ADVISORS AND HER APPEAL TO THE URBAN POOR WITH TALK OF RADICAL CHANGE IN COLOMBIAN SOCIETY. NEVERTHELESS, HIGH VOTER REGISTRATIONS IN THE MAJOR CITIES AND LIBERAL AWARENESS THAT A VICTORY IS AT HAND PRESAGE A CONSERVATIVE DEFEAT. AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF VOTERS WHO BLAME GOMEZ' FATHER FOR THE CARNAGE KNOWN AS LA VIOLENCIA WILL TAKE REVENGE ON THE FATHER BY CASTING THEIR BALLOTS FOR A CANDIDATE OTHER THAN GOMEZ.

4. DRAMATIC EVIDENCE OF CONSERVATIVE AWARENESS OF IMPENDING DEFEAT CAME LAST WEEK WHEN BERTHA DE OSPINA, WIFE OF EX-PRESIDENT MARIANO OSPINA AND GOMEZ' POLITICAL GODMOTHER, SAID THAT IF THE CONSERVATIVES LOSE THE BLAME WILL LIE WITH PRESIDENT PASTRANA, WHO HAS NOT LIFTED A FINGER TO HELP THE CONSERVATIVE CAUSE. DONA BERTHA CLAIMED THAT PASTRANA'S NEUTRALITY IS A DISERVICE TO HIS PARTY. FOR HER INTEMPERATE STATEMENT BERTHA WAS BURIED IN AN AVALANCHE OF CRITICISM BY CONSERVATIVES AND LIBERALS ALIKE. PASTRANA'S REPUTATION AS A STATESMAN ROSE CORRESPONDINGLY. HE HAS FOR MONTHS RESISTED ALL EFFORTS BY HIS CO-RELIGIONARIES TO HAVE HIM USE HIS OFFICE FOR PARTISAN PURPOSES AND DONA BERTHA WAS MERELY GIVING VOICE TO THE FRUSTRATIONS FELT BY MANY CONSERVATIVES.

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5. ANAPO CANDIDATE MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO APPEARS DOOMED TO COME IN A POOR THIRD. SHE HERSELF HAS WORKED EXTRAORDINARILY HARD IN THE CAMPAIGN AND WILL GARNER SEVERAL HUNDRED THOUSAND VOTES, BUT ANAPO HAS BEEN HAMPERED BY LACK OF FUNDS, POOR ORGANIZATION, A DEARTH OF RESPECTED LEADERS, AND THE LOSS OF THE CONSERVATIVE BASE THAT CONSTITUTED THE BACKBONE OF THE PARTY. MRS. MORENO HOPES FOR A GOOD SHOWING AMONG THE URBAN POOR BUT SHE IS COMPETING HERE WITH THE LIBERALS, WHO HAVE THE BETTER

LEADERS, MORE MONEY AND BETTER ORGANIZATION. TOO, ANAPO'S BEST ISSUE, THE COST OF LIVING, IS ONE THAT THE LIBERALS HAVE USED EFFECTIVELY FOR THEIR OWN ENDS. ONLY IN BOGOTA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF VALLE DOES ANAPO HAVE A CHANCE OF MAKING INROADS INTO THE STRENGTH OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES# "

6. APRIL 15 WAS THE FILING DEADLINE FOR CANDIDATES FOR ALL OFFICES. ASPIRANTS FOR THE 112 SENATE SEATS AND THE 199 SEATS IN THE CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES NUMBER IN THE THOUSANDS. EMOTIONS RAN HIGH IN THE SELECTION OF LISTS AND IN MANY DEPARTMENTS THERE ARE ONE OR MORE DISSIDENT LISTS IN EACH PARTY, A CIRCUMSTANCE THAT FORETELLS A LACK OF DISCIPLINE IN THE NEW CONGRESS THAT WILL CONVENE JULY 20. LISTS HAVE ALSO PROLIFERATED FOR DEPARTMENTAL ASSEMBLIES AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT DISSENSION AT LOCAL LEVELS WILL INDUCE MANY VOTERS TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS FOR PRESIDENT, BUT ABSTAIN IN THE VOTING FOR OTHER OFFICES. OTHERS TAKE THE OPPOSITE VIEW, CLAIMING THAT INTENSE INTRA-PARTY COMPETITION WILL SWELL THE TOTAL VOTE FOR ALL OFFICES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 3105

7. WASHINGTON READERS MAY FIND USEFUL AN EMBASSY PROJECTION OF HOW THE VOTING WILL GO. WE AGREE WITH THE PREVAILING VIEW THAT THE LIBERALS WILL WIN, BUT THEY WILL BE HARD PUT TO

ACHIEVE AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, EITHER IN THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE OR THE CONGRESSIONAL RACE. THEY SHOULD COME CLOSE, HOWEVER, WINNING OVER FORTY-FIVE PERCENT OF ALL VOTES CAST.

8. ALMOST ALL OF COLOMBIA'S WORKING POLITICIANS EXPECT A TURNOUT OF NOT MORE THAN 5,000,000 VOTERS. IF GOOD WEATHER PREVAILS ON ELECTION DAY WE EXPECT THE TOTAL TO GO TO 5,500,000 OR HIGHER.

9. ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE VOTE, WE LOOK FOR 2,500,000 TO 2,800,000 VOTES FOR THE LIBERALS; 1,800,000 TO 2,200,000 FOR THE CONSERVATIVES; 600,000 TO 800,000 FOR ANAPO; 200,000 TO 300,000 FOR UNO; AND 50,000 TO 100,000 FOR THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. OUR VIEW DIFFERS FROM THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES IN SEVERAL RESPECTS. THE LIBERALS DO NOT LOOK FOR MORE THAMOUWNTPPNPPP VOTES FOR THEMSELVES AND DO NOT EXPECT THE CONSERVATIVES TO APPROACH THE 2,000,000 MARK. CONSERVATIVES CLOSE TO GOMEZ HOPE TO GET 2,000,000 VOTES AND EITHER TO WIN BY A NARROW MARGIN OR HOLD THE LIBERALS TO THE NARROWEST OF VICTORIES. MRS. MORENO CLAIMS TO BE CONFIDENT THAT SHE WILL

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PULL MORE VOTES THAN GOMEZ. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT ANAPO WILL GET 1,000,000 VOTES.

10. WITH RESPECT TO THE BREAKDOWN OF CONGRESSIONAL SEATS, WE LOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING RESULTS:

A) SENATE:

LIBERALS - 51
CONSERVATIVES - 40
ANAPO - 16
UNO - 4
CD - 1

TOTAL 112

B) CHAMBER OF REPRESENTATIVES:

LIBERALS - 90
CONSERVATIVES - 72
ANAPO - 28
UNO - 8
CD - 1

TOTAL 199

11. THE ABSENCE OF RELIABLE POLLS AND DISINTERESTED OBSERVERS MAKE ELECTION FORECASTING IN COLOMBIA A HIGH RISK VENTURE.

WE THOUGHT IT WORTHWHILE, HOWEVER, TO ATTEMPT A PROJECTION IN ORDER TO GIVE WASHINGTON BACKGROUND MATERIAL TO USE WITH THE PRESS AND OTHERS INQUIRING ABOUT THE ELECTIONS.

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